

Monday Night Raw – February 17, 1997: Three World Title Matches...Sort Of

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 17, 1997

Location: Bridgestone Arena, Nashville, Tennessee

Attendance: 5,876

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross

It's the night after In Your House: Final Four and we have a new world champion in the form of Bret Hart. However as a condition of him being champion, he has to defend the title tonight against Sycho Sid, who didn't get his title shot against Shawn due to losing his smile. We're coming up on Wrestlemania 13 in about five weeks so the buildup will begin tonight. Let's get to it.

I've already done the next two weeks worth of shows and links to the reviews can be found at the bottom.

WWF World Title: Bret Hart vs. Sycho Sid

That's quite the way to open up a show. Before the bell we're told that Undertaker will meet the winner of this match at Wrestlemania 13. They stare each other down but here's Steve Austin to attack Bret. Referees and backstage personnel break it up but Sid takes a shot to the knee somewhere in there, putting him down on the mat for some swearing. Austin is taken away and Sid gets back inside, but Patterson and Brisco (some REAL Americans) and some referees won't let the match start like this. More on this later.

We look back at Shawn vacating the belt last Thursday, because of a "knee injury." I'm sure that wouldn't be a case of

Idon'twanttojobthetitlesoI'mfakingthiswhoething-itis.

We get some shots of Final Four last night which is still an awesome match.

Sid is freaking out in the back (moreso than usual) but says nothing is going to keep him from winning the title tonight.

Marc Mero vs. Savio Vega

Apparently Sable has been being much more aggressive lately to help Mero win some extra matches. Savio has the Nation with him, other than Farrooq who is in the balcony, looking down on the arena. Things start fast with Mero snapping off some armdrags and a dropkick sends Savio into the waiting arms of Crush. Mero dives over the top rope to take them both out but Vega takes over as they get back inside. A spinwheel kick in the corner has Mero in trouble and Vega chokes away on the ropes.

Marc gets a quick two off a crossbody and he pounds away with rights and lefts in the corner. Savio comes back with a snap suplex and sends Mero to the floor for a beating from the white rappers known as PG-13. Sable will have none of that and fires off some martial arts kicks to dispatch the white boys. Back inside and Mero hits a Samoan drop but the Nation chases Sable into the ring for the DQ.

Rating: C-. This was fun while it lasted but the ending hurt it a bit. Mero and Vega were both guys that could go when they were motivated and Mero was at his best around this time. This didn't have time to go anywhere with less than five minutes, but at least they were trying.

Ahmed Johnson, in what appear to be orange pajamas, clears the ring with a 2x4.

Bret says he can't worry about Austin and has to defend the title against

Sid tonight. After that, he'll be waiting on his next opponent. Lawler accuses Bret of overlooking Sid but Bret says he's just looking out for #1.

Intercontinental Title: Leif Cassidy vs. Rocky Maivia

Cassidy, more famous as Al Snow, lost to Mero last night but is getting this shot tonight. Such is life in the WWF. Rocky is still billed from the South Pacific here which makes me picture him singing show tunes. He won the title from HHH last Thursday and beat him again in a rematch last night. Before the match starts, here's Sunny in a barely there pink outfit to hit on Rocky.

They slug it out to start until Rocky clotheslines Cassidy out to the floor. Back in and a cross body gets two for Rocky and we hit the armbar. We go split screen for an interview with HHH who says Maivia is just a lucky punk. These two really were joined at the hip for their entire careers. HHH blames Goldust for costing him the title last night and promises it's not over with him. Cassidy finally fights out of the armbar and elbows Rocky in the face to take over.

A quick rollup gets two for the champion but Leif pokes him in the eye to take over again. Cassidy uses a nice forward leg trip to take Rocky down and put on another armbar. The fans think this is boring and I can't say I blame them. Lawler compares Rocky to some other hotshot rookie that hasn't proven he can do anything yet: Tiger Woods. Back up and Leif DDTs the arm and hooks yet another armbar. A top rope shot to the head gets two for Leif but Rocky slams him down when Cassidy tries another. The high cross body sets up the shoulder breaker to retain Rocky's title.

Rating: D. Rocky was still brand new at this point and it was really showing badly. Cassidy is a very talented guy but there was nothing for him in something like this. He was part of the New Rockers at this point but it was clear that such a gimmick wasn't going to take him anywhere. Who would think that these two would feud over being Mankind's best

friend someday?

We go to the announcers where Lawler rants about how stupid ECW is. He issues a challenge for them to show up next week if they're tough enough. Lawler also throws in a jab at WCW, saying a friend of his took a Lawler sign to a WCW show in Memphis but they took it away from him.

We see a clip from the national anthem of all things.

Here are Goldust and Marlena to address HHH making a pass at Marlena. Goldust says he's from Hollywood but this is reality. HHH has crossed a line and now this is personal. All the money in the world can't buy Marlena and the only way that HHH is going to get closer to her is over his dead body.

Marlena clears up a few rumors about Goldust, saying that he is all man from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet, making him more of a man than HHH could ever be. Cue HHH with a cheap shot to Goldust, allowing him to pound Goldie down into the corner. There's a Pedigree so Marlena slaps HHH in the face, drawing in the yet to be named Chyna to shake Marlena like a toy, earning her another trip to the pokey.

Headbangers vs. Hardy Boys

Yes it's them and yes they're still really new around here. On the other hand you have the Hardy Boys who are REALLY young, with Matt being 22 and Jeff only 19 here. Jeff scores with a running clothesline on Most before bringing in Matt to drop an ax handle on the arm. We go split screen to hear Farroq saying he'll finish Ahmed Johnson whenever he feels like it and lists off a bunch of expensive stuff that Johnson owns that he doesn't want the fans to know about. Their match at Wrestlemania should just be a Chicago street fight.

The Headbangers take over and pound away on Matt including Most hitting a

springboard cross body to the floor. Back in and it's off to Thrasher who stomps Matt down into the corner before lifting him up into a suplex/side slam combo for no cover. Jeff gets the tag and almost immediately is clotheslined in half, setting up a powerbomb/guillotine legdrop combo for the pin.

Rating: D. This is much more of a historical anomaly than anything of note. The Hardys would become a regular low level tag team soon after this while the Headbangers would look like the bigger deal for a good while. The match was just a squash but it's always fun to see these future stars in their early days.

WWF World Title: Sycho Sid vs. Bret Hart

Sid has a bad knee due to the Austin run-in earlier tonight. We cut to the back and Austin is attacking Bret Hart in the back, ramming him into a steel door and even Vince McMahon is helping break it up. No match again.

Gorilla Monsoon says the title match will happen tonight, period.

Flash Funk vs. Owen Hart

Flash Funk is 2 Cold Scorpio and Brodus Clay minus about 100lbs. Both guys flip out of wristlocks to start before Owen catches a kick, only to have Flash flip him over with the foot Owen caught. That's a hard one to describe. They keep countering each other until Owen clotheslines him down but Funk is right back up. Both guys try dropkicks at the same time and we have a standoff.

We get to the interesting part of the match: Paul Heyman of ECW calls in to talk to Jerry Lawler. They try a test of strength as Heyman accepts the challenge on behalf of ECW. Lawler makes fun of some of the big ECW names such as Sabu, Sandman and Blue Meanie. Owen tries the Sharpshooter

but Flash gets a sloppy rollup for two. Clarence Mason, the annoying attorney that managed Owen around this time, comes out to get Owen's attention for some reason.

Owen goes to the floor so Flash can hit a big dive as Owen's partner British Bulldog comes out to yell at Mason. We take a break and come back with Owen bridging up into a backslide for two. Hart gets another near fall off a German suplex and there's a spinwheel kick to put Funk down again. We cut to a split screen with Steve Austin who says he went over the edge a long time ago.

Austin won the Rumble a long time ago and Shawn quit because he's afraid to face someone like Austin. Owen suplexes Funk down but Flash fights back with some shots to the face and a backdrop. The high cross body gets two on Owen and a great looking moonsault gets the same. They run the ropes a bit and Bulldog gets in a cheap shot with the Slammy, allowing Owen to hit a spinwheel kick for the pin.

Rating: C. I don't ever remember a match with so much stuff going on besides a match when Vince Russo wasn't in charge. Think about it: we had something going on with Mason, interference, a phone call and an interview, all in a ten minute TV match. The match was solid from what I could see, but there was too much going on to keep track of what was going on.

Bart Gunn vs. Hunter Hearst Helmsley

Honky Tonk Man is on commentary as he's still looking for a protege. After the bell we get a promo from HHH, saying he doesn't know who Marlina is and he doesn't care. HHH grabs the arm to start but Bart counters into a wristlock of his own to take over. Gunn scores with a dropkick and takes HHH down into an armbar. Back up and Helmsley misses a charge into the corner and we're right back to the armbar. Helmsley gets up again and takes him down with a jumping knee to the face but here's Goldust to chase HHH into the crowd for a countout.

Rating: D. Another boring match here which was only there for the ending. Goldust vs. HHH continues to be an interesting story but the matches never quite lived to the story. Bart Gunn was such a forgettable guy after splitting from Billy until the Brawl For All of all things gave him some notoriety.

We go to Dr. James Andrews to talk about Shawn's knee. Apparently it's badly twisted but surgery isn't a requirement just yet.

WWF World Title: Bret Hart vs. Sycho Sid

Let's try this one more time. Bret is defending in case that was lost in this whole mess tonight. Sid takes him into the corner and pounds away to start before whipping Bret hard into the corner to work on Bret's bad back. Bret has a bad back? Apparently so for the sake of the match. Sid takes him down again with a hard clothesline before stomping down onto Bret's chest a few times. All challenger so far.

Bret comes back with some punches to the ribs and a backbreaker, causing JR to say Sid isn't 6'9 now. Unless a backbreaker involves cutting Sid's foot off, I'll have to disagree. Sid fires off more shots to the back and hits a backbreaker of his own (Lawler: "YAHOO!") for two. Bret comes back by taking out the leg and drops some elbows onto the knee for good measure. The leg is wrapped around the post and there's the Figure Four around the post (making its TV debut).

We take a break and come back with Bret bending the knee around the ropes and kicking away at the thigh. Sid fights out with some forearms to the chest and a legdrop for two. Sid (with the knee looking perfectly fine) goes to the middle rope for another legdrop but Bret blocks a chokeslam. Bret misses a charge into the ropes but is still able to backdrop Sid over the top. Austin tries to come in through the crowd but Sid punches him down. There's the Sharpshooter but Austin sneaks in with a chair shot to break it up. The powerbomb (dude sell the leg!) is enough to give Sid the world title.

Rating: D+. I remember Benoit having the same problems with Sid two years later: there's only so much Bret can do when Sid won't sell the freaking knee injury. Sid had a knee injury coming into the match, had it worked on during the match, then got caught in the Sharpshooter but can hit the powerbomb fine? That doesn't work and it's not Hart's fault at all.

Undertaker comes out to stare down Sid to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a very simple concept: the stuff involving Bret vs. Austin is awesome and the rest of the show is about as dull as you can get. That was WWF's biggest problem for a long time: they couldn't fill in a full show with interesting stuff and there was no reason to watch. Things would get better, but for now it was the main event scene or nothing.

Here's the February 24 show if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/03/14/monday-night-raw-february-24-1997-ecw-invades-raw/>

Here's the March 3 show if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/02/05/2557/>

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